Promoting national dialogue and consensus-building in education policy

UNESCO should promote *education as a shared and collective responsibility* involving collaboration between many stakeholders: government, civil society organizations, community groups and the private sector. UNESCO will facilitate the process of national dialogue and building a consensus on education policy. This will begin with a national workshop on *Education in Afghanistan: immediate needs and future directions*. UNESCO will support further consultations and workshops, to provide a policy framework to guide the work of the Education Ministries and the contributions of Afghanistan's external partners. UNESCO will facilitate the establishment of a national Education for All Forum, in line with UNESCO's post-Dakar responsibilities within the EFA movement.

Capacity development for sector-wide education planning, coordination of international assistance programmes, and education management information systems

Capacity development in educational planning is an area central to UNESCO's sector-wide mandate, and UNESCO has recognised excellence in this sphere, notably through the work of its International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP), the UNESCO Institute of Statistics and regional networks. Since Afghanistan faces a multiplicity of educational planning tasks, at national, provincial and local levels, there is an urgent need for capacity development. UNESCO will mobilise resources to address these needs, including:

- *technical assistance to support the task of sector-wide education planning;*
- *training of educational planners in-country, under an on-the-job training programme for national and provincial staff;*
- *training of Afghan trainers at IIEP and the regional training networks;*
- *staffing, equipment and materials;*
- *training in project design, monitoring and evaluation,* and in *financial management;*
- *capacity-building in the area of educational statistics and Education Management Information Systems;*
- *capacity-building in community-based school governance and management.*

Capacity development for teacher education and training

UNESCO will support the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education in meeting the tremendous challenge of rebuilding the teaching

force for the schools. Assessment of teacher competencies and recognition of in-service training received through NGO projects within the country or for refugees will be a major task. The return of women teachers from exile will help fill teaching gaps, provided that they feel a sense of security. The issue of teacher compensation will require sensitive treatment, with an effort to avoid inter-agency disparities and to balance fairness and sustainability, and possibly exploring the potential of food for work as payment in kind during the early stages of recovery.

There will need to be a massive programme of teacher recruitment and training, in cities and rural areas, to meet the expected demand for schooling. UNESCO will mobilise resources to *strengthen the education and training of teachers, through face-to-face and distance learning methods, including condensed courses, in-service training and the use of senior teachers as mentors to inexperienced staff. It will support the rehabilitation of training institutes and training of provincial education staff. UNESCO will support the reconstruction of the university faculties of education, for the training of teachers and training of teacher trainers.* Resources will be mobilised for provision of equipment, textbooks and reference materials, facilitating the renewal of teacher education curricula and practice teaching arrangements, and linkage with one or more international education faculties for purposes of staff development. All infrastructure projects will support the inclusion of students with disability.

Support for secondary education and for the renewal of national accreditation and examination systems

Although many agencies are supporting the reconstruction of primary schooling, *there is a real danger of neglecting the crucial role of secondary education.* Secondary education provides vital skills for national reconstruction and for the development of the education system itself, through the education of future teachers. Moreover, it is important to respond to the aspirations of young people, including those who have had to wait years for the opportunity to resume their studies, as this will contribute to national stability. It will be necessary to identify all potentially available secondary school teachers, and provide training for their reinsertion into the national education system. Alternative approaches to secondary education such as distance education will be encouraged for remote locations. All infrastructure projects will support inclusion of students with disability. Gender-sensitive life skills education and education for peacebuilding and citizenship will be developed for children and adolescents at upper primary and secondary level.

UNESCO will mobilise donors to provide support for secondary education, including rehabilitation/construction of school buildings, equipment, books and materials, and training for principals and staff. It will seek functional linkages with major donors who are willing to fund such activities.

The reconstruction of assessment and examination systems is vital to the restoration of functioning secondary and tertiary education programmes. Given the breakdown of educational administration in recent years, and the large numbers of Afghans who have studied outside the country, *suitable mechanisms must be devised to establish criteria and procedures for assessing levels of learning, the acquisition of competencies, and the*

validity of records and certificates. While not a validating agency, UNESCO should assist these processes through capacity building, the preparation of guidelines, and re-establishment of examination systems. The attraction of teachers, especially female teachers, back to their profession may partly depend on the recognition of their studies.

Support for the reconstruction of higher education

The importance of the higher education sector in the reconstruction of Afghanistan can hardly be over-estimated, given the loss of professionals of every kind due to war and emigration. The profound desire of the younger generation for the opportunity to enter university is also to be taken into account, providing a stabilising element in national renewal if these young people are able to study effectively in well-resourced institutions and a destabilising force if these institutions are still housed in damaged buildings, poorly staffed and ill-equipped.

UNESCO will offer support to the Ministry of Higher Education in developing a *consultative mechanism to develop a national policy for higher education*, in developing a *national plan for higher education*, and in *mobilising resources to support this plan.* A key feature will be a TOKTEN programme to draw on the expertise of Afghans in the diaspora, and the development of linkages with foreign universities for purposes of staff development.

UNESCO will support the rehabilitation of universities and other higher education institutions, with training/updating of faculty members in-country and through fellowships; with equipment, textbooks and reference materials, and renewal of infrastructure. It will support the development of foundation courses for under-qualified applicants, including intensive courses in English and mathematics. UNESCO will consult with female faculty members, women's organisations and women students to identify ways to increase the access of girls and women to higher education. All infrastructure projects will incorporate access for persons with disability.

UNESCO should support the Afghan authorities with expert advice on issues of quality assurance and accreditation. Its work in connection with universities will complement its responsibilities in the fields of science and technology, cultural heritage and communication. UNESCO will initiate capacity-building programmes for science and technology faculties, to strengthen national research, development and teaching capacity in the basic sciences, biological sciences, geosciences, environmental sciences (water, renewable energies, disaster preparedness), science and engineering education.

Capacity development for curriculum renewal and textbook development

Curriculum renewal will feature prominently in the tasks facing the new Ministry of Education. Different viewpoints will need to be taken into account and reconciled. UNESCO should provide assistance at the level of the education sector as a whole. Through its International Bureau of Education and its Culture of Peace initiative, it can provide impartial expertise on the issues of *curriculum reform and textbook policy,* including

updating of subject matter and methodology, audit of curricula, inclusion of elements promoting health education, cultural heritage, and skills and values for peace, tolerance, citizenship and human rights. Special projects will focus on science/technology education and environmental education, in view of the extensive damage to the man-made and natural environment and in support of economic reconstruction. UNESCO will mobilise resources to support reconstruction of the curriculum wing of the Ministry of Education, including technical assistance, in-country training and study abroad. The textbook policy, and the textbook development and production programmes, will be supported through the mobilisation of the Organisation's specialised services, other partners and networks. UNESCO will support the *adaptation of the Peace Education Programme of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies* to serve the needs of Afghan students and young people.

Capacity development for technical/vocational education

Afghanistan is about to begin a major programme of reconstruction which will require a skilled labour force and paraprofessionals in many fields, from engineering and agriculture to accounting and office management. UNESCO will assist the Ministry of Education in a review of existing technical/vocational education and training programmes, and in the preparation of a plan for revitalisation and modernisation of these activities. This will be undertaken in collaboration with other agencies working in the training of paraprofessional and skilled workers. UNESCO will support the training of managerial staff and instructors, and will mobilise resources for the rehabilitation/reconstruction of infrastructure and provision of equipment and materials. Flexible methods of outreach are needed, including in some instances the use of distance education and in others the use of apprenticeships. Non-formal technical and vocational education through community TVE centres combined with entrepreneurship training can provide alternative livelihoods to women, ex-combatants and persons with disability, and can be linked with literacy and preventive education.

Capacity development for literacy and non-formal education for all

Afghanistan faces a situation of widespread illiteracy, especially in the rural areas, among women and the poor. UNESCO, through its specialised services, institutes notably the UNESCO Institute of Education, Hamburg, and networks, will assist the Ministry of Education in formulating a flexible plan for community-based approaches to non-formal education. UNESCO will assist the Ministry to establish a national programme for literacy, with a special branch for women's literacy, and will train literacy planners and trainers of trainers, and support advocacy at all levels. It will assist the Ministry in coordinating the literacy work of NGOs, and will draw on NGO experience in helping develop age- and gender-specific and culturally relevant literacy materials, in three or more languages . Non-formal education programmes will also cover topics of immediate concern to the population, such as health, child care, peacebuilding and human rights. A major function of the non-formal education programme will be to ensure that excluded groups such as adolescents girls and boys can enter or re-enter the formal system, through equivalency to particular levels of primary schooling.

UNESCO will support the development of Community Learning Centre-based innovative programmes of non-formal and informal education, as part of its regional CLC network, including programmes linked to radio listening. It will support the development of a system of community libraries.

Use of new technologies in support of formal, non-formal and informal learning

UNESCO will place a strong emphasis on *flexible and innovative approaches to delivering educational services,* including outreach to isolated locations, especially rural areas, and neglected sections of the population. The use of radio, and later other means of communication, will be crucial to this effort. The combination of different methods and delivery systems will be aimed at creating learning environments at the village or community level. The learning needs of out-of-school youth and adults are diverse and should be met in adaptive ways. Where appropriate, age-grouping should be adopted in order to build confidence and to facilitate the design of accelerated courses. Adult education, whether focused on livelihood skills development or on preventive education programmes such as mine awareness and drug awareness, health and skills for conflict resolution, should seek also to enhance functional literacy.

UNESCO will build on its recent experience with programmes for Afghans such as 'New Home, New Life' and education programmes for adolescents, to provide *support for education linked to radio, and other media,* in special areas such as health, mine awareness, the environment and peacebuilding, and as a vehicle to provide non-formal education, teacher training and, later, formal distance education through an *Open Learning programme*. This will require a major investment in broadcasting capacity nationwide as well as production facilities and staffing. It has become increasingly clear, however, that mass communication can be used for good or ill, and it is important to maximise its use for national development.

It is important to utilise new information technologies for the purposes of education, and to provide education and training in these technologies. UNESCO is aware of the potential for the use of computers, the internet and CD-ROMs as a way of jump-starting higher education in a situation when all libraries have been destroyed and courses disrupted. Use of generators and of mobile learning centres could bring these technologies within reach of a significant number of young people across the country. UNESCO will assist the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education in assessing the potential of the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and in meeting the need for education and training in the use of ICT, drawing upon the expertise of its Regional ICT programme.

MODE OF OPERATIONS

The modalities of operation for the UNESCO strategy will be as follows:

1. Strong collaboration with sister UN agencies at all levels (headquarters and field) in order to build complementary partnerships, shared frameworks and networks.

2. Close cooperation with the national authorities, notably the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education.

3. Close partnership with multilateral agencies, bilateral agencies and NGOs supporting education sector programmes in Afghanistan.

4. Use of the TOKTEN mechanism for drawing on the expertise of specialists among the diaspora.

5. Advocacy with donors, regarding Afghanistan's education needs in the short term and in order to implement its Medium Term strategy. This is a prerequisite for consolidating the peace process and building stability in the region.

6. Collaboration with other agencies to support a sector-wide situation analysis for education, based on which UNESCO will prepare a plan of action for resourcing and implementing the strategies and programmes described above.

7. Facilitating the process of national policy consultations on education issues, commencing with a national workshop on immediate needs and future directions.

8. Provision of a technical team to reinforce the capacity of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education to respond to the immense challenge of educational reconstruction.

9. Drawing on the services provided by UNESCO field offices in neighbouring countries and the Regional Bureau; revitalising Afghanistan's participation in the EFA process and regional education programmes and activities.

UNESCO SUPPORT STRATEGY FOR EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN

Paris, January 11, 2002



- Direct immediate support to the Ministers of Education and Higher Education
- Promoting national dialogue and consensus-building on education policy
- Capacity development for sector-wide education planning, including coordination of international assistance programmes, and education management information systems
- Capacity development for teacher education and training
- Support for secondary education and for the renewal of national accreditation and examination systems
- Support for the reconstruction of higher education
- Capacity development for curriculum renewal
- Capacity development for technical/vocational education and textbook development
- Capacity development for literacy and non-formal education for all
- Use of new technologies in support of formal, non-formal and informal learning

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The reconstruction of education in Afghanistan is a massive task and challenge, both for Afghans and the international community. Meeting this challenge will require the mobilisation of all Afghanistan's external partners working within a reconstruction framework defined by Afghans. UNESCO will seek to facilitate this process, offering support to national

Database

EFA National Plans

United Nations Cooperation

Contacts

dialogue, institutional development and the education and training of teachers and of staff to manage the education system. UNESCO's intervention will be based on its mandate and its catalytic role in ensuring that Education for All is achieved according to the goals and criteria set out in the Dakar Framework for Action, developed at the World Education Forum in April 2000.

UNESCO recognises that there will need to be a phasing of educational response, with the current interim and transitional phase, leading to the development and implementation of a Medium Term Plan. The interim phase will be dominated by such issues as provision of educational supplies, ensuring safe spaces for education, matching teachers to classes, and repatriation of large numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries. Even during this period, however, there needs to be work on preparing the Medium Term Plan, and collection of data, provision of equipment and recruitment of national staff to undertake this task.

UNESCO will work within the framework of all ongoing initiatives, in close collaboration with UNICEF and other UN agencies, multilateral organisations, governmental and non-governmental organisations, in order to achieve the objective of Education for All. The Organisation will seek to give 'added value' in its fields of special competence. Its mandate requires it to support all aspects of the education process, and in due course its interventions may be of many different kinds, reflecting gaps and opportunities for innovative approaches. Initial support will take the form of a technical team to reinforce the capacity of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. UNESCO will subsequently focus on the strategic areas noted below.

Direct immediate support to the Ministers of Education and Higher Education UNESCO will help the two Ministers establish working offices by funding, in each case, an Executive Officer and a Secretary for a six month period, and ensuring that the basic equipment and supplies needed to run their offices are in place. UNESCO staff will help the two Ministers begin their work by counselling on policy and operational issues as requested. In consultation with the Ministers, UNESCO will assist in the establishment and funding of a Senior Advisory Board as a think-tank of eminent Afghan academics to provide them with impartial and high-level advice.

Promoting national dialogue and consensus-building on education policy

UNESCO will facilitate the process of national dialogue and building a consensus on education policy. This will begin with a national workshop on *Education in Afghanistan: immediate needs and future directions*. To follow up this event it will sponsor appropriate national consultations and dialogues, at dates to be determined in consultation with the Government of Afghanistan. UNESCO will support consultations on specific themes, as needed, and the establishment of a National Forum for Education for All, as recommended at the Dakar World Education Forum.

Capacity development for sector-wide education planning, coordination of international assistance programmes, and

education management information systems

Following the immediate task of setting up Ministerial offices, and in order to assist the government in rapidly setting up its systems of education administration, planning and management, UNESCO will mobilise resources to enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. This will include provision of technical assistance, needed equipment and facilities, and recruitment of staff. Re-establishment of effective education planning units at national and provincial level is essential for enhancing absorptive capacity, at a time when there is widespread donor and NGO interest in supporting the expansion of access to education. UNESCO will provide in-country training for national and provincial planners, drawing on the International Institute of Educational Planning and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, and regional or international networks. Fellowships will also be provided for the training of trainers at these institutes.

Capacity development for teacher education and training

UNESCO will support the recruitment and training of teachers, particularly through rehabilitation of training institutes, training of provincial field staff, and the introduction of distance learning methods. UNESCO will support the reconstruction of university faculties of education, for the training of teachers and of teacher trainers.

Support for secondary education and for the renewal of national accreditation and examination systems

UNESCO will mobilise support for secondary education (including science, technology and environmental components), which will play a crucial role in developing the educated workforce needed for reconstruction and development (including teachers needed for the development of basic education, both formal and non-formal, and expanding the education opportunities for girls). The development of secondary education will also facilitate the return of exiles, including under TOKTEN programmes.

UNESCO will support the government in the complex task of renewing accreditation and examination systems, including recognition of the various studies undertaken by Afghans under different auspices, both within Afghanistan and in exile.

Support for the reconstruction of higher education

The higher education system must be restored, given its role in preparing professionals needed for national development, and the expectations of the younger generation seeking higher education. UNESCO will support the Ministry of Higher Education in establishing a consultative process to develop a national policy for higher education, in preparing a plan for higher education and in mobilising resources to support this plan, including the TOKTEN mechanism.

Capacity development for curriculum renewal and textbook development

Through its International Bureau of Education and its Culture of Peace Programme, UNESCO will support the process of curriculum renewal, and the preparation and implementation of a national programme for textbook development. This will entail the updating of curriculum content and methodology, textbook adaptation and preparation, and audit of curricula and textbooks to include health and survival skills, gender sensitivity, environmental awareness, peace and civics education, as appropriate. The curriculum development process will be strengthened through in-country support and study abroad. The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, based at UNESCO, will also be drawn upon to serve the needs of Afghan children and young people, especially through adaptation of its Peace Education Programme to meet local needs.

Capacity development for technical/vocational education

UNESCO will assist the Ministry of Education in a review of existing technical/vocational education and training programmes, and in the preparation of a plan for revitalisation of these activities, which provide skills needed for national reconstruction. UNESCO will support the training of managerial staff and instructors, and will mobilise resources for the rehabilitation/reconstruction of infrastructure and provision of equipment and materials. Non-formal technical and vocational education combined with entrepreneurship training can provide alternative livelihoods to women, ex-combatants and persons with disability.

Capacity development for literacy and non-formal education for all

UNESCO will assist the Ministry of Education in formulating a flexible plan for community-based approaches to non-formal education, to meet the needs of marginalized groups including girls and women who have missed the opportunity for formal education. UNESCO will support the development of culturally appropriate innovative programmes of non-formal and informal education, including programmes at community learning centres and linked to radio listening, that can later be scaled up to help meet the backlog of unmet need for education.

Use of new technologies in support of formal, non-formal and informal learning

UNESCO has considerable experience in the field of distance education in Afghanistan. Given the vastness of the country and difficult terrain, the use of distance education should be a key element in the short and medium term education strategy, covering the informal, non-formal and formal education systems. UNESCO will support a review of policy options in this area, and the establishment of a national distance learning programme. UNESCO will support appropriate innovative approaches to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in education, and training in ICT.

INTRODUCTION

After two decades of armed conflict the people of Afghanistan face a harsh reality. Socio-economic conditions continue to deteriorate, with large areas affected by drought. The basic infrastructure is largely destroyed. Education and health systems are disrupted and disorganised. Millions of Afghans are internally displaced or living as refugees in neighbouring countries. Poverty, ecological destruction, social injustice and human rights violations endanger the newly won national unity. The Afghan people need the assistance of the international community to consolidate the peace and reconciliation process and support the long term task of reconstruction leading to sustainable development. However, this international mobilisation must be situated under the goals, policies and priorities defined by the Afghan people.

UNESCO's educational strategy will rest upon a thorough, comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of Afghanistan's educational system, conducted jointly with sister agencies. UNESCO will advocate that an integrated or 'whole system' approach is adopted by Afghanistan, and will make available its expertise and experience for this purpose. UNESCO's specific programmatic contributions, however, will be targeted to priority areas for system recovery and development. Thus, while the analytical basis of its educational strategy will be comprehensive in scope, UNESCO will undertake very specific actions in both the short-term and the longer term. UNESCO will seek to play the role of catalyst and facilitator by cultivating and sustaining a consensus-building effort.

UNESCO has the mandate and responsibility to promote the development of all sub-sectors of education, for all sectors of the population, and with a longer term perspective. UNESCO will therefore be actively involved in the reconstruction process, and will work closely with UNICEF, UNHCR and other agencies and NGOs, following the principle of complementarity, in support of an integrated and coordinated framework developed under the leadership of the Afghan authorities.

CURRENT SITUATION OF AFGHAN EDUCATION

Afghanistan has a long tradition of education development. In 1950, the enrolment in primary education represented only 6% of the corresponding age group. Efforts to expand education and improve its quality were initiated at that time, and there were three five year plans for education between 1956 and 1973. A policy of free and compulsory education was adopted in 1964. Progress was interrupted by the years of conflict, however.

The Education for All Assessment (2000) for Afghanistan cites gross enrolment ratios for primary education of 35% for boys and 19% for girls in 1990, with a rise to 63% for boys and 32% for girls by 1995, and a decline to 40-60% for boys and 3-6% for girls in 1999. Afghanistan is thus far from the global goal of basic education for all.

There is similar weakness at the level of secondary, technical/vocational and higher education, which are strategic sectors for training skilled professionals and paraprofessionals for reconstruction and sustainable development. This is extremely important in reconstruction of the education sector because so many experienced educators have emigrated to other countries, to avoid armed conflict, find employment and ensure education for their children.

Large numbers of Afghans are living as refugees in countries neighbouring Afghanistan, including an estimated 3 million in Pakistan, over 2 million in Iran and smaller numbers in CentralAsia and India. In the year 2000, over 100,000 Afghan children were officially registered in Iranian primary schools (47% girls), 44,000 in secondary schools and over 350 at university. A similar situation exists in Pakistan where some 150,000 students (30% girls) attend refugee schools.

Educational reconstruction will have to take fully into consideration Afghanistan's linguistic diversity, including the principal languages of Dari and Pushtu, and other significant linguistic groups including Turkic languages. Moreover, during the last two decades, students within Afghanistan and in exile have followed a wide variety of different curricula. Much of this learning and teaching has been based on outdated curricula and materials, and on pedagogical methods emphasising rote learning, although new approaches have been introduced under various assistance programmes.

A significant number of agencies and NGOs have provided support to rural and urban schooling for Afghan children, despite restrictions, interruptions and various difficulties in the field. UNESCO has supported education projects in Afghanistan over several decades, including recent work on education through radio, and production of educational materials.

PHASING OF EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE

The process of educational reconstruction will require the provision of resources and administrative structures to support the urgent rehabilitation of education across the country. There will be a transitional programme in 2002, covered by the United Nations Consolidated Appeal. This will give time to prepare a Medium Term Plan for 2002-2006 (or 2003-2007).

The transitional phase would need to address key issues such as: needs assessment; strengthening the capacity of the Ministries of Education and Higher Education; coordination of international assistance within an overall national programme framework; national dialogue on key issues of education policy; support for multiple education delivery systems; restoring schooling, especially access for girls; rehabilitation of schools; training and deployment of teachers; restoring functioning systems of secondary, technical/vocational and higher education; educational opportunities for young ex-combatants; strengthening non-formal

education; provision of textbooks and teaching materials; enriching curricula with survival and peacebuilding messages; and capacity building for education planning, management, teacher training and curriculum reform. A major issue will be the problem of teacher remuneration. Education programming must take account of the likely return of many refugees and internally displaced Afghans to their areas of origin.

The period 2002/3 must be used to develop a Medium Term Plan for educational reconstruction. The Medium Term Plan must include rehabilitation and reconstruction of damaged educational infrastructure, with school mapping and microplanning by provincial and district authorities and at community level; the development of norms, standards and guidelines for buildings and equipment; strengthening teacher training capacity; renewal of curricula, teaching methods, textbooks and other educational materials, to support effective learning and the development of skills for health and peaceful living; measuring and improving the quality of education at all levels; innovative approaches to formal, non-formal and informal education, including the use of educational radio and new technologies generally; vocational training for youth and ex-combatants; capacity building for education planning and information systems, management and administration.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

UNESCO's strategies and actions in Afghanistan must be guided by its broad principles and mandate, including:

1. Support for the *process of national education dialogue and policy development*.

2. An *inclusive approach to Education for All* through which the educational needs of all stakeholders including women, youth, minorities, the disabled, the displaced, and the isolated are addressed.

3. An approach based upon *universal values*, reconciling the rights of all members of Afghan society.

4. *Building on ongoing initiatives*, which means respecting the efforts and achievements of Afghans in overcoming many obstacles. This orientation is particularly supportive of community-based initiatives and civil society developments and to 'scaling up' approaches (i.e. building on successful practices), especially in the short-term, taking account of the refugee experience.

5. *Capacity-building and institution-building*, in order to overcome the loss of expertise and skills, and to address the destruction of infrastructure and the breakdown of basic services, and support the return of refugees.

6. *Working within the framework of the UN system,* in close collaboration with other UN agencies and external partners of Afghanistan.

7. Responding to *urgent, short-term and transitional needs within a framework of longer term reconstruction.*

PROMOTING EDUCATION FOR ALL

At the core of UNESCO's support for educational reconstruction is the conviction that *education is a basic human right of all Afghans of all ages (children, youth and adults)*, in accordance with Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and that this right is independent of gender, ethnic group, religion, location or other discriminatory factors. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) reaffirmed this right for children and adolescents. The right to education was most recently re-affirmed in the Dakar Framework for Action arising out of the World Education Forum (Dakar, April 2000). The right to education should be viewed in terms of its lifelong and 'life-wide' dimensions, which are particularly relevant to Afghanistan's present and prospective situation. The legislative framework for Education for All in Afghanistan was already established in the 1960s. However, much work remains to be done to achieve this objective, which will be the central focus of educational reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Education within the family will be important in preparing children for schooling. Much evidence shows that early childhood education and care significantly enhance the learning capacities and educational opportunities of children and young people. In the case of Afghanistan, however, the absence of organized early childhood provision outside the home is unlikely to change substantially for many years to come. Consequently, given the key role to be played by families and parents, especially mothers, in the provision of care and education of young children, families should be reached through non-formal and informal means, including the use of radio.

The promotion of *universal primary education*, with special emphasis on schooling for girls, should be the highest priority on the educational agenda. Issues of *equitable access* are not confined to gender but also involve such factors as location (especially rural areas), region (some regions were poorly served by education systems in the past), ethno-linguistic issues, disability and poverty.

The expansion of primary schooling will require restoration of *access to secondary education*, since the opportunity of secondary education is a major incentive for completion of the primary cycle. Moreover, lower secondary education is widely considered to be essential for consolidating the skills of literacy and numeracy, especially in poorly resourced educational situations.

The return of refugees and members of the diaspora will be influenced by the quality and range of educational opportunities available within the country. The restoration of *quality secondary, technical/vocational and higher education* will play a vital role in this respect, as well as in the provision of the high level manpower and womanpower required for national reconstruction. The potentially unifying role of the University of Kabul and other Kabul-based technical and higher education institutions should be recognised as a factor for peace.

Non-formal and informal education will have an especially significant role to play in the particular situation of Afghanistan. Equitable access requires flexibility in the ways in which non-formal educational opportunities are delivered, and linkages to the formal system. This is of especial importance in reaching older girls and women. Radio is an important tool. There should also be linkage of literacy and health education with craft skills development, income generation projects and microfinance.

Over the past two decades, the widespread disruption of schooling, and the general lack of monitoring, supervision and inspection have left a gap in the *recognition of learning*. It is imperative that this issue is addressed as a matter of urgency. Parents need to know if their children's learning in, say, home schools or refugee camps, will be taken into account. Students need to know if they can resume their studies, and at what stage. Students should work within a standardised national curriculum framework, supported by nationally recognised textbooks; and after completing their courses need to take recognised end of course national examinations.

UNESCO'S PROPOSED CONTRIBUTION

UNESCO will work with sister agencies of the United Nations and other partners to support the Afghan Government in meeting the immediate task of rehabilitation, and the longer term tasks of reconstruction. It will focus especially on the objective of Education for All. Key areas in which UNESCO will provide support, beginning immediately and continuing into the medium term are described below.

Direct immediate support to the Ministers of Education and Higher Education

UNESCO will help the two Ministers establish working offices by funding, in each case, an Executive Officer and a Secretary for a six month period, and ensuring that the basic equipment and supplies needed to run their offices are in place. UNESCO staff will help the two Ministers begin their work by counselling on policy and operational issues as requested. In consultation with the Ministers, UNESCO will assist in the establishment and funding of a Senior Advisory Board as a think-tank of eminent Afghan academics to provide them with impartial and high-level advice.